

National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services

School Bus Manufacturers Technical Council

Federal Register Highlight 01-02

Subject: Final Rule – Vehicles Used to Transport Children in Head Start Programs

Date: January 18, 2001

Federal Register Page #: 5295 through 5315

Summary:

The Children and Families Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services administers the Head Start Program. That Agency has issued a Final Rule concerning the safety features and safe operation requirements for vehicles used to transport children to and from Head Start activities.

This Final Rule has been issued after considerable review of the comments received in response to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, which was published in *the Federal Register* on June 15, 1995.

The Final Rule requires Head Start programs that provide transportation to use a school bus or “Allowable Alternative Vehicle” by January 18, 2006. The rule also requires that by January 20, 2004 each child is restrained in an age- and weight-appropriate child restraint system. Additionally, by January 20, 2004, a bus monitor must be on each Head Start vehicle and will escort any child that needs to cross a street in crossing that street. The rule also specifies driver requirements, including a CDL for the type of vehicle they will drive, a records check, and a physical. In addition, training for the driver and monitor on the operational aspects of safely transporting children is required. Other requirements concerning routing, transporting children with disabilities, coordinating community transportation, etc. are included in the Final Rule.

An “Allowable Alternative Vehicle” is defined as one that meets all of the FMVSSs that apply to school buses, except the flashing lamps required by FMVSS No. 108 and the stop signal arm required by FMVSS No. 131. Based on information that has previously been obtained from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, it is likely that a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to create a category for such a bus will be issued by NHTSA sometime this year.